

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Raymundo Agustin, 86, former plantation worker, ranch hand, coffee picker, and coffee farmer

"I am on my own on the coffee work. Whatever I earned nobody shares with me. The plantation work, the boss shares with my earning. In my coffee work, all the income is mine. I have no boss. I can do what I liked to do. Nobody to supervise me. I rested when I wanted to because there was no boss."

Raymundo Agustin, Ilocano, was born on March 15, 1895, in Camiling, Tarlac, Philippines. The fifth of eight children, he left school at an early age to work on the family's rice farm.

In 1916, Raymundo married Evarista Dancil and soon began farming his own lands. Hoping to make more money, he came to Hawaii in 1925. After a year as a mule handler at Kohala's Niulii Plantation, Raymundo came to Kona to pick coffee. At the end of the coffee season, he returned to Kohala. In 1934, he began working as a cowboy at Waimea's Parker Ranch.

Ten years later, Raymundo returned to Kona where he farmed coffee for the next 35 years. Having turned over his farming responsibilities to younger members of his family, he is now a retiree.

Tape Nos. 9-24-1-80 TR and 9-25-1-80 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Raymundo Agustin (AG)

December 14, 1980

Kainaliu Mauka, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Modesto Daranciang (MD) and Michiko Kodama (MK)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Ilocano. Translation done by Modesto Daranciang.]

MD: This is an interview with Raymundo Agustin at his home in Kainaliu ma uka, Hawaii. Today is December 14, 1980. Mr. Agustin, where were you born?

RA: In Luzon, Camiling, Tarlac, Philippines.

MD: When were you born?

RA: In 1895.

MD: What month and date?

RA: March 15, 1895.

MD: How many children were there in your family?

RA: Eight children.

MD: How many boys and girls?

RA: Four girls and four boys.

MD: What is your number in the family?

RA: I am number five.

MD: What were your parents doing for a living when you were a child?

RA: My father was a farmer.

MD: What did he plant?

RA: He planted rice, sugarcane, other kinds of food like beans, mango, beans, turnips and corn.

MD: What do you think of your parents as farmers?

RA: They were not really poor but money was scarce at that time because in the Philippines it was hard to find a job. As for food, my parents were able to support us.

MD: When you were able to go to school, to what school did you go?

RA: I went to Bobong No. 1 in the barrio, where there was a school, but the teachers were poorly educated during that time, not like the teachers now who are highly experienced. At that time, the government rulers were Spaniards so there were no experienced teachers in English.

MD: What was taught?

RA: They were teaching from a big chart where there were pictures.

MD: What subjects?

RA: First grade subjects.

MD: Did they teach writing or reading?

RA: They also teach reading.

MD: Did they teach in English, Spanish or Filipino?

RA: They taught in English at that time.

MD: Not in Spanish?

RA: No.

MD: Where was the school? In town or in the barrio?

RA: In the barrio of the Bobong No. 1.

MD: How many years did you attend the school?

RA: I went to school for more than seven years.

MD: How was your schooling compared to that of the neighbors' children?

RA: To me, the neighbors' children schooling was better because I did not attend school often. My parents died early.

MD: What were your feelings about leaving school?

RA: When I left school, I had a mind of my own that I already can work alone. That's why I did not have higher education because I helped the family.

MD: Did you feel sad about leaving school?

RA: I was sad but I wanted to help my family. Besides, my mother was the only parent left. I was still young when I started working on the rice farm.

MD: Did other children help support the family?

RA: Yes, some helped. The married ones did not help because they were living on their own. Only the single ones worked hard for the family.

MD: As a child what did you do for recreation?

RA: When I was a child, I found happiness in taking care of my animals. I had a goat, a karabaw, a horse and a cow. I liked to do that [taking care of the animals].

MD: Haven't got any diversion with your friends?

RA: I did not have time because I was busy with my work.

MD: Did you play ball games?

RA: No.

MD: What were your chores around the house?

RA: I cleaned the place where we got our food, like vegetables. I have to water my plants because I planted foodstuffs.

MD: Have you been helping at home?

RA: No, I did not.

MD: When you left school, how many hours a day did you work in your garden?

RA: Sometimes six hours.

MD: How many days did you work a week?

RA: Sometimes, I worked four or five days a week.

MD: If you were not working, what were you doing?

RA: If I was not working, like on Saturdays, I went to church.

MD: Is the church near your place or in town?

RA: It's in town, about three or three and a half miles away.

MD: Did you enjoy church?

RA: Yes, on Saturdays and Sundays, I went to church. But because it was quite far I missed church sometimes.

MD: What motivates you to go to church?

RA: As the saying says, "Pray to the Lord and He will help you." I had been doing that when I was young.

MD: Were there plenty relatives that lived around your place?

RA: Plenty.

MD: What were your activities with your relatives?

RA: During fiestas, we created merrymaking activities. We prepared different foods for feasting.

MD: Were there other sources of entertainment aside from those?

RA: Only those mentioned.

MD: What kinds of celebrations and holidays did you celebrate in your community?

RA: In our place, we celebrate Christmas and New Year's and they were sources of happiness for us children.

MD: In your town what occasions were you celebrating?

RA: In town, we celebrate our town fiesta in May. It was a happy occasion in the town of Camiling.

MD: What was being observed in church?

RA: The main observance was the Mass said by the priest. [That] is what I knew because when we were in church we were only looking at the altar and that's the source of our happiness as children.

MD: Were there work activities in the barrio where people get together?

RA: There was something for merriment. The barrio also started a work force for young people. Anyone 18 years old until married [age] has work. The leaders did this to give work to the young.

MD: Was it successful?

RA: It was a success for five years. When the leader died, the work force was disbanded. There was no one who could take his place. He was the one who started the work force.

MD: Do you know his name?

RA: Joseph Transfiguration.

MD: That work force, were there others of that kind in other places?

RA: No, that was organized only to give work to the young in our place. I don't know if other places had it. This was done out of concern for the young. There was work for us before where we were paid 50 cents a day.

MD: How much were you paid in the work force?

RA: Fifty cents a day.

MD: What kind of work did you do?

RA: Planted vegetables and other plants. He [work force leader] sold the produce.

MD: Where did he sell them?

RA: In the store in the town of Camiling. That was the work we did until he died. After his death there was no more work for the young.

MD: What were your feelings about the work?

RA: It was nice. This was a chance for us to earn a living. If not for that, there was no chance for us to go to school.

MD: When the work force was organized, were you going to school?

RA: Yes, I was going to school at that time.

MD: He was at school when the work force was organized.

MK: He went to school for seven years and the work force was for men 18 years and over?

MD: You said the work force was for men 18 years old until they married, how old were you when you went to school?

RA: I was 16 or 15 [years old]. They started working from 16, 18 [years old] until married. If married, they will find another job.

MD: Now he said, he started work from 16. When you get married you are out of the work force.

MK: He went to school until what age?

MD: How old were you when you left school?

RA: Probably 18 years old. I was already a young man.

MD: What special events happened in your childhood?

RA: When I was 14 to 16 years old, my life was hard. When my parent [father] died I had to work. I almost died while working. When I was 16 or 17 I got sick. There were hardships in my life. However, I overcame the illness.

MD: What kind of illness?

RA: I had a high fever because of overwork.

MD: What did you expect to become when you became an adult?

RA: What I had in mind was to find work so I would not have a hard life.

MD: What did your parents expect of you?

RA: My parents did not have any say about my future because they can't help me. Rather, it was me who helped them.

MK: What did he say, that he has to go to school on his own?

MD: If he wants to go to school, he has to go on his own because the parents can't help him.

MK: Did he get married in the Philippines?

MD: Yes. When did you get married?

RA: In 1916.

MD: How did this come about?

RA: When I was single, I was going to school at age 17. I wanted to court one of my classmates but because I was in the barrio the father of my third degree niece who became my wife said that he would send his daughter to school with me in town. We went to school together. I had no thoughts of getting married then because I was young. [I thought] there will be plenty time for that and I wanted to get an education. My father died and I wished to help the family so I left school. When I quit school, the girl who is my wife quit school, too.

MD: She was your niece?

RA: Yes, because her father was my cousin. Because we were neighbors, when I got sick, she came to visit me because nobody helped me. My mother was at work in the fields.

MD: Just the two of you?

RA: Yes, the two of us. I think she doesn't have the feeling when we were going to school together. She visited me and helped me when I was sick.

I told her, "When I get well, I'll go to your house."

"You may come uncle," she said.

After one month, my health improved so I visited their home. Her parents asked me if I should continue my studies. I told them I wanted to but we didn't have the money. They told me they would help me if I would go back to school. I felt ashamed because I might not be able to pay them back. Because we were close relatives, they urged me to continue my studies. I continued my studies because of their support. When I reached fifth grade, that ended my formal education. My mother asked me to stop going to school because they needed my help. I was forced to stop. Even the girl stopped too, because we were going to school together.

When we go to school it was three miles from the barrio. Teachers at that time were poorly qualified. Teachers during that time had only fourth or fifth-grade education and they could teach already. It was not like your time when teachers were qualified to teach school. In those days, Spanish was mostly taught.

When we reached the age of majority, we decided to get married. I informed her parents of my intentions, and they accepted my proposition for one reason: she won't go far because we were close relatives. When she was 17. I was 20. Her parents said that it was good for us to get settled so we can start life on our own. We were married in 1916.

MD: What is her name?

RA: Evarista Dancil.

MD: How many children did you have?

RA: Four.

MD: When you got married, did you work?

RA: Yes.

MD: What kind of work?

RA: I went into farming. I had to support my family.

MD: Describe what you did as a farmer.

RA: I had a karabaw, I plowed and prepared the soil for planting. Then I looked for people to transplant the rice seedlings.

MD: What time did you work?

RA: In the morning, because I did not have a watch I would go early. I came home at dusk. I was at the farm the whole day.

MD: Were you able to support your family nicely?

RA: With the help of God I was able to support my family.

MK: What kind of farming did he do?

MD: What did you plant?

RA: I planted rice, sugarcane, vegetables, corn and beans.

MD: Looking back, how was your married life?

RA: It was hard. There was no money. All I own was a working animal. I did not own land. I worked for a landlord. However, we had enough.

MD: Were you happy?

RA: Yes, we were happy.

MD: Were you living on the landlord's property?

RA: No, I was living on our own property.

MD: You only go to work on the farm?

RA: I only go to work on the farmland. The produce was divided equally between me and the landowner. I sold some of my produce share to buy the things we needed.

MK: One half he keeps, one half goes to the owner. Was there some sort of lease or rental agreement with the owner of the land?

MD: Were there any written contract with the landowner?

RA: There was no written agreement but the regulation at that time was you keep half the produce.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MD: Did you have any written agreement as to how much you rent the land for or [an agreement] on the number of years you were guaranteed to work on the land?

- RA: No agreement. The condition the landowner gave us was what we followed. They told [us] we divided the produce equally after it was harvested.
- MD: Was the harvesters' share taken out before you and the landlord divide the produce?
- RA: The harvesters got one-fifth of all the harvest. What was left was divided between me and the landlord. That was the regulation.
- MD: Was there any guarantee how long you can work on the land?
- RA: No guarantee. The landowner may terminate you as he wished.
- MK: Is there anything that kept them from taking a little bit more of their share?
- MD: When you work on the land, is there anything that prevents you from taking more of the share?
- RA: You can't do anything because if you wanted more share than what you were supposed to get you are terminated. (Laughs)
- MD: You thought of coming to Hawaii in 1925?
- RA: Yes.
- MD: Why did you decide to come to Hawaii?
- RA: Because life was hard in the Philippines. There were people who needed better jobs. I thought of going abroad so I discussed the matter with my wife. It was hard for her to let me go but my family was growing. There were already four boys. I thought of how to support my family. I asked her to let me come to Hawaii. After all, it was only for three years. I promised to be in Hawaii only three years. She let me come to Hawaii. When I arrived here I worked. It was nice for the first few months. [But] I was not used to be awoken in my sleep. If the camp boss came, he kicked the door.
- MK: Ask him what made him think life in Hawaii would be better. Why would he think life in Hawaii would be better than life in the Philippines?
- MD: Why did you think life in Hawaii would be better than life in the Philippines?
- RA: Those who came to Hawaii ahead of us were sending money to the Philippines. (Laughs) I thought that if I were in Hawaii, I could do the same. I asked my wife to let me go so I can support the children. It was hard for her to let me go, but I told her that life would be hard [in the Philippines] because if I stayed there [in the Philippines] it would be hard to support a growing family. So she let me go.

MK: He said that people were sending back money. Ask him about how many people came from his locality to Hawaii and how much were they sending back according to what he knows.

MD: In your place, how many came to Hawaii and how much were they sending home?

RA: There were five and they were sending back money. One bought a parcel of land, about five acres. He paid \$700 that came from Hawaii. I thought that if I come to Hawaii I can also buy land.

MD: How about the others, did they send money?

RA: Yes, they sent money.

MD: How much?

RA: Some sent \$100, some sent \$50, at that time pay was \$1 a day.

MK: Those five men who came from Camiling, did he know how those five men were recruited? Were they recruited by the same company?

MD: How about the five men, were they recruited?

RA: They were recruited in 1912, 1913.

MK: Was Mr. Agustin also recruited?

MD: Were you also recruited?

RA: Yes, I belonged to the last recruitment.

MK: Does he remember what company recruited him?

MD: Do you remember what company recruited you?

RA: I can't remember because the agent who recruited me came from Manila. Also, I forgot his name. It is already 56 years passed [that time].

MD: What were your feelings when you left the Philippines?

RA: I had mixed feelings, happiness and sadness. Sadness because I left my loved ones behind and happiness because I would be earning money.

MD: What were the feelings also of your family and parents?

RA: They were sad because they don't know if I can reach my goal or not.

MD: Why?

RA: Because life is uncertain. If I die here, they won't see me anymore.

MD: What preparations did you make to come to Hawaii? Were there papers to make?

RA: When I came to Hawaii I signed a contract in Manila.

MD: What was the nature of the contract?

RA: The contract stated that I'll be in Hawaii for three years after which I'll be returned to the Philippines free.

MD: Did you come to Hawaii free?

RA: I came free [i.e., with free boat passage] because I was recruited.

MD: Were there any inspections made?

RA: There was inspection. There was an inspection.

MD: What kind?

RA: About health.

MD: Did you bring something with you? Money or what?

RA: I did not bring anything with me except my clothes and ten pesos pocket money they gave me. That money was given by the company. I was given cooking needs, two denim pants, two jackets.

MD: When did you leave the Philippines?

RA: June 1925.

MD: What date in June?

RA: June 26.

MD: From what port did you leave the Philippines?

RA: Pier 7, Manila.

MD: What was the name of the ship?

RA: Shinyō-maru.

MD: Who were the other passengers that you knew?

RA: There were ten acquaintances of mine from my barrio. There were 300 passengers in the ship.

MD: What barrio did you come from?

RA: Bobong No. 1.

MD: Were there other passengers besides the Filipinos?

RA: There were others, Chinese, Japanese and Turkish.

MD: How many passengers do you think were in the ship?

RA: There were 300 recruits plus other people. In my estimate there were 600 or so.

MK: Half of them were Filipinos?

MD: There were ten from his barrio.

MD: When did you arrive in Honolulu?

RA: I arrived here in July, about the end [of the month].

MD: Did anything happen when you arrived in Honolulu?

RA: I can't remember [anything special] but when we arrived, we were unloaded and brought to the immigration office.

MD: What was your impressions of Hawaii when you arrived?

RA: I thought Hawaii was a small piece of land because the other islands that we passed were small.

MD: How long were you in Honolulu?

RA: We stayed two days before we were sent to the Big Island.

MD: From Honolulu, you went to Kohala in 1925. What part of Kohala?

RA: In Niulii, the last plantation in northern Kohala.

MD: How did you go to Niulii?

RA: When we arrived in Mahukona [Big Island port], we rode in a train to Niulii.

MD: Why did you go to Niulii and not other places?

RA: That plantation recruited us. When we arrived in Honolulu we were ordered to go to Niulii. Others were sent to Maui and other places.

MD: Did you hear about Niulii before you went?

RA: I heard that houses were old and grass grows on the roof. I found it true when I arrived there because houses were old and grass grew on the roof. I thought life must be hard because it was very cold.

MD: Who did you hear [that] from?

RA: I heard from Honolulu that the climate was cold.

MD: What part of Niulii did you work?

RA: In the mill of Niulii.

MD: Describe the place, the people and houses.

RA: The houses were old. A few new ones were built by the plantation. It was said that if better houses were built, more people will move there. Nothing happened because there was no money to meet the needs of the people. The plantation ended broke.

MD: Were there plenty people?

RA: Not much.

MD: What ethnicity?

RA: Filipino, Portuguese and Puerto Rican.

MD: What ethnicity is the most?

RA: Filipino.

MD: How many Filipinos do you think there were?

RA: There were more than 200.

MK: Where did the Filipinos come from?

MD: Where did the Filipinos come from and what dialect did they speak?

RA: Some came from Visayas; Ilocos Norte; that was where they came from.

MK: In terms of number, how many Ilocanos and how many Visayans?

MD: How many Ilocanos and how many Visayans?

RA: There were more Ilocanos.

MD: How many?

RA: There were more than 100 Ilocanos the rest Visayans. There were Japanese, Portuguese and Puerto Ricans.

MK: Were the Ilocanos and Visayans separated?

MD: Were the Ilocanos and Visayans separated?

RA: There was a long house which was made into rooms. Ilocanos and Visayans were mixed.

MD: How was the relations between Ilocanos and Visayans?

RA: Our relations were good. We did not understand their Visayan dialect. We communicated in pigeon Tagalog.

MD: What was your work?

RA: I worked as a mule man.

MD: Explain what a mule man does.

RA: A mule man plows between the sugarcane rows. We used hoes and a plow.

MD: How many hours did you work a day?

RA: Eight hours a day.

MD: What time did you start work?

RA: I start 6:00 a.m. till 3:30 p.m.

MD: How was the pay?

RA: One dollar a day. Hard living. (Laughs)

MD: How would you compare your work in the Philippines to that of Niulii?

RA: Work in Niulii is better because you are not muddled. In the Philippines it rains a lot.

MD: How was the pay? More here or in the Philippines?

RA: More here because even if it was only a dollar it can be exchanged into two pesos.

MD: How were you paid?

RA: We were paid at the end of the month. We were paid in gold, not [with a] check.

MD: How were your relations with the supervisors?

RA: Some [supervisors] good and some were bad. They were pushy.

MD: Who were the supervisors?

RA: There were Scots, Koreans, and Japanese.

MD: How were your relationships with the other workers?

RA: We planned to organize ourselves with the purpose of asking for better pay because pay was so cheap. We asked our boss for higher pay but they told us if work improved, our pay will also be higher.

MD: So relationships were good?

RA: Yes, there was no troubles.

MD: Were they trying to organize a union?

MD: Did you plan to form a union?

RA: Just an agreement. A union among us Filipinos for better pay.

MK: Was it a success?

RA: The boss told us that if work as well as sugar prices improved, we will get higher pay.

MD: What did you do on weekends and when you were not working on the plantation?

RA: On Sundays, that's the only day off from the plantation, we go fishing.

MD: Do you work on Saturdays?

RA: Yes, we worked on Staurdays.

MD: You go fishing?

RA: Yes, we go fishing. We go to the mountain to get food like watercress, shrimps and river trout.

MD: What were your forms of recreation?

RA: We watched tennis and ball games at Kapaau. We also watched hula dances by Japanese girls and also by the Hawaiians.

MD: Did you play baseball or basketball?

RA: No.

MD: Were there movies, then?

RA: There were movies but we were not so interested in movies.

MD: Did you go sometimes?

RA: Yes, sometimes because if you go to the movies and you work the following day, you will be sleepy at work.

MD: Did you go to cockfights?

RA: There were no cockfights like Kona.

MK: Who played tennis?

RA: The Japanese, Portuguese and haole.

MK: Were they the workers, supervisors or higher people?

MD: The ones playing tennis, were they workers, supervisors, or your bosses?

RA: The high school students.

MD: What did you celebrate in Niulii?

RA: We celebrated Rizal Day.

MD: How about Christmas?

RA: New Year's, December 25. If you work you are tired.

MK: How did they celebrate Rizal Day?

MD: How did you celebrate Rizal Day?

RA: During Rizal Day we bought a cow from Waimea and we ate it together.

MD: Were there parades?

RA: There were no parades. We were not organized. We got together and ate together.

MD: Why did you leave Niulii?

RA: When I was one year in Niulii, I looked for a better place to work. I was forced to move out because I wanted a work with better pay.

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE ONE; TAPE NO. 9-25-1-80 TR

MD: Continuation of first interview with Mr. Raymundo Agustin. Tape two of two on December 14, 1980.

When you left Niulii you came to Kona?

RA: Yes.

MD: Why Kona, not other places?

RA: I heard that this is a better place to work.

MD: What part of Kona?

RA: In Keopu.

MD: What kind of work?

RA: Picking coffee.

MD: How did you find the work?

RA: I came with people who had been here. They told me this is a good place to work because you can earn \$1.50 to \$1.70 a day. I came to Kona with a family man from Kohala. He found me the job.

MK: The people who came with him to Kona were experienced coffee pickers?

MD: Yes.

MD: Who did you work for?

RA: The name of the Japanese?

MD: Yes.

RA: Amachi.

MD: What was his full name?

RA: Shigeo Amachi.

MD: Did you work for one farmer or worked for others at the same time?

RA: I worked only for him until we finished the season. I can't go to others because I lived in his house.

MD: Did you work only for that season?

RA: Yes, I only worked for that season after which there was no more working.

MD: What did you do after the season?

RA: I looked for hō hana job.

MD: What do you do in hō hana?

RA: Hoe the weeds on the coffee farm.

MD: Do you pull?

RA: We used the hoe. It [hō hana] was a Hawaiian word, I think.

MK: Was it hō hana in the coffee land or Kona [sugar] plantation?

MD: What kind of hō hana? Was it at the coffee farm?

RA: Yes, at the coffee farm.

MD: Did you hear of other farmers who paid more than others when you picked coffee?

RA: There were those who paid more but they had less berries in the trees to pick. Those that paid cheaper had more berries in their trees.

MD: Was there any competition in looking for a coffee picking job?

RA: None. No competition.

MD: Why was there no competition?

RA: Because we were doing the same job. If we found job nobody was paid more or less.

MK: There were no shortage of workers?

MD: Was there any shortage of workers?

RA: There were not enough workers.

MD: Why did not the farmers give higher pay so they can attract more workers?

RA: The Japanese farmers were organized. No one farmer paid more than the other.

MD: How much were you paid for picking coffee?

RA: One dollar twenty-five cents [\$1.25] a bag.

MD: How many hours did you work?

RA: Early in the morning or as soon as you can see the berries till sundown.

MD: When do you then start to pick?

RA: Start 6 [o'clock] a.m. and quit 6 [o'clock] p.m. 6 [o'clock] to 6 [o'clock].

MD: When picking coffee, did you have rest periods?

RA: No, we never rested until we go home.

MD: How about eating lunch?

RA: We ate for a short time, unlike the plantation we had a half hour.

MD: What were your days off?

RA: In the coffee land?

MD: Yes.

RA: There were no days off. Even Sundays we worked. Everyday [work] no more Sunday in Kona.

MD: How many bags did you pick from sunrise to sunset?

RA: From morning til afternoon you can pick two bags. Those that were fast can pick four bags.

MD: How many bags did you pick then?

RA: I picked three bags.

MD: How many bags does the farmer expect you to pick a day?

RA: He expects your average.

MD: How many?

RA: Two and a half bags.

MD: What happens if you can't pick that number of bags?

RA: Nothing happens.

MD: How did you learn to pick coffee?

RA: The farmer will teach you. If you picked plenty green berries he tells you to pick only the ripe [red] ones and the three-quarter [reddish-orange] ripe.

MD: How do you know where to pick coffee?

RA: You were given lines [of coffee trees]. They gave you two lines. Pick the two lines. After finishing the lines take two lines next to the other pickers.

MD: If you compare your work in Kona to that of Niulii, which is better?

RA: It was better in Kona.

MD: Why?

RA: Because if I worked the whole day, I picked three bags, I earned \$3.75. In Niulii only \$1.10.

MD: Which work was easier?

RA: Here in Kona.

MD: Why is it easier in Kona?

RA: You earned more money.

MK: How long did he work during the coffee season?

MD: How long did you work during the coffee season?

RA: You start September, October, November, December, January. Five months, season.

MK: The other months he did hō hana work, how much did hō hana work pay?

MD: How much were you paid hō hana work?

RA: This is contract work, also day work.

MD: If day work, how much were you paid?

RA: If day work, \$1.50 a day.

MD: How many hours do you work?

RA: Eight hours.

MD: If contract, how much were you paid?

RA: By contract, sometimes you earned \$2.50 or \$2.75.

MD: How many hours do you work?

RA: Whole day, 6 [o'clock a.m.] to 6 [o'clock p.m.] you earned \$2.50 to \$2.75.

MD: What was your relationship with the other coffee pickers?

RA: Our relationship was good. We had no troubles. If you pick coffee our boss do not want us fighting. He handled us like any business.

MD: How often were you paid?

RA: It depends on the boss. If your boss pay you every month you get paid at the end of the month. But you can draw [pay earlier] if you are in need of money.

- MK: How did the farmers pay them in advance if the pay was based on the number of bags you picked?
- RA: If you need advance money, he [coffee farmer] gave you from his own pocket not on the bags you have already picked.
- MD: What if you haven't picked any?
- RA: He won't give you money if you haven't picked any.
- MD: Were you paid in check or cash?
- RA: We were paid in cash.
- MD: If you work for different farmers was the pay different?
- RA: Some they paid you check.
- MD: I mean the amount of pay or money. Were there those who paid more?
- RA: Maybe if you go another place they paid more. In Kona the Japanese farmers were organized and they paid the same amount.
- MD: If you worked for the farmer were there perquisites like food, house, clothes, water and light?
- RA: Yes, there were. The Japanese gave food like vegetables, fish and others.
- MD: How about house?
- RA: It was free.
- MD: Anything more free?
- RA: Light, everything free. Even food, you eat with them like the first farmer I worked for. They feed me free.
- MD: Were food, light, house, water deducted from your pay?
- RA: No, they no take out.
- MD: Was that the usual practice?
- RA: No, others don't do that but the farmer, the first farmer I worked for gave me those things free. The other Japanese do not give those things free.
- MK: In his conversations, he mentioned coffee farmers as being Japanese, were there other farmers besides the Japanese?
- MD: Were there no other farmers aside from the Japanese?

- RA: I don't know of farmers other than Japanese. The farmers were all Japanese before.
- MD: Describe the house you lived in Amachi farm.
- RA: There was a platform. I lived in a room under the platform. The kitchen was joined to the house. We were using rain water. There were no piped water. No electric lights. We used lamps.
- MD: How was the toilet?
- RA: There was a toilet, but was far, outhouse. Not like now inside the house.
- MK: How does housing in Kona compare with that in Niulii?
- MD: How do you compare your house in Niulii to that of the coffee land house?
- RA: The Kona house was better than the house in Niulii because the owner of the Kona house has time to clean and maintain the house. In Niulii, nobody takes care of the house. Only the occupants cleaned it but they worked in the sugarcane field.
- MK: In Niulii they lived in a long house. Many workers lived in the long house. In Kona, how many lived in one house?
- RA: In the first place I stayed, one family but I had my own room.
- MD: How about the other workers, was it the same?
- RA: I was the only worker. Because few people in this side before. No more working men. No more Filipinos yet that time.
- MD: Was your pay based on the price of the coffee?
- RA: I don't know because I received what they paid me by the bag, \$1.25 per bag. I don't know for how much they sold their coffee.
- MD: Were you paid more because you were experienced picker or a returning picker?
- RA: No, because the Japanese farmers were organized. They didn't pay more based on that.
- MD: What forms of recreation did you have if not picking coffee?
- RA: If you pick coffee, there was no rest. If you finish work then you rest at home.
- MK: How does he feel about having no spare time? Was there no time for recreation?

RA: Nighttime you can go to the store.

MD: Don't you feel sad for not having rest?

RA: No, because I was still able to work.

MK: If he comes home from work, what does he do?

MD: He goes to the store once in a while.

When you came to Kona were there other Filipinos?

RA: There were few Filipinos when I came.

MD: What kinds of Filipinos?

RA: There were Visayans, Tagalogs, there were a few from the plantations. Just few Filipinos.

MD: How many do you think?

RA: In Kona?

MD: Yes.

RA: About 50 Filipinos here.

MK: All over Kona or just Keopu area?

RA: All of Kona.

MK: Those Filipinos who were here were they ones who came to pick coffee and return to the plantation?

RA: Yes, they came to pick coffee and returned to the plantation.

MK: How did he know there were only 50 Filipinos?

RA: Because in Keopu where I stayed there were four of us. In Honalo, there were three. In Kealahou there were more than ten. In Honaunau, about five to ten. Where coffee was nice, most people go. Kealahou has better coffee, so more people. Not so good coffee in Keopu so not so much Filipinos there.

MK: Did he know the other Filipinos by name?

MD: Did you know the names of the other Filipinos?

RA: No. I don't know their names. There were those I knew like Juan, Pablo, Pedro, and Petronilo.

MD: Did you do anything together?

RA: The reason I knew, there were 50 was when someone came from Honolulu to make a visit, one Filipino leader.

MD: Was he [Pablo] Manlapit?

RA: No.

MD: The consul?

RA: Yes, when he came here we congregated in Kealahakua and these were 50 of us.

MK: How did they get together? How did that come about?

RA: One man assembled us for the visit of the consul in Kealahakua.

MD: What did you do when you got together?

RA: The consul talked about our lives, work, the houses we lived in, our drinking water.

MK: Did anything come out of that? Did anything come out of his visit?

RA: I don't think something came out of what he said because we were moving out of Kona then returning during the coffee season.

MK: The visit of the consul was one large thing with the group getting together. How about activities, where say about two, three, or four got together?

MD: Were there occasions Filipinos got together aside from the visit of the consul?

RA: When the people were getting settled in Kona, they were given the opportunity to form a club. Who was that?

MD: [Severo] Dinson?

RA: Yes, that's what happened and Filipinos got together.

MK: That was much later [1940's]. Would Filipinos get together and do something together earlier?

MD: Before the formation of the club were there occasions to get together?

RA: Nothing. There were no other organizations.

MD: Why did you leave Kona to go to Kohala Mill?

RA: After the coffee season, there was no work here so I returned to Kohala.

MK: Why did he not go hō hana?

MD: Why did you not work hō hana?

RA: There was no everyday work so I left.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 9-30-2-80 TR and 9-31-2-80 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Raymundo Agustin (RA)

December 19, 1980

Kainaliu Mauka, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Modesto Daranciang (MD) and Michiko Kodama (MK)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Ilocano. Translation done by Modesto Daranciang.]

MD: This is an interview with Mr. Raymundo Agustin at his home in Kainaliu ma uka, Kona, Hawaii on December 19, 1980.

You lived in Keopu in 1926-31, then you returned to Kohala Mill. Why did you go to Kohala Mill and not other places?

RA: I went there because I knew the place.

MD: What part of Kohala did you go?

RA: Northern Kohala.

MD: Describe the place.

RA: The place is a sugar plantation. It is also a nice place but it was windy and rainy.

MD: Were there many people?

RA: There were plenty people.

MD: What ethnicity?

RA: Filipino, Hawaiian, Puerto Rican, Japanese and Scots.

MD: How many Filipinos were there do you think?

RA: In our plantation there were 300 workers.

MD: How many Filipinos?

RA: More than 200.

MD: Where did those Filipinos come from?

RA: They were like me from the Philippines.

MD: Were they Ilocanos or Visayans?

RA: They spoke different Filipino dialects.

MD: What dialects did they speak?

RA: Ilocano, Visayan and Tagalog.

MD: Were there women?

RA: Yes, there were.

MD: Plenty?

RA: Plenty. There were recruited women.

MD: Were they married?

RA: They were paired to men when they came. Just a few were married.

MD: Were there Filipino families there?

RA: There were.

MD: Plenty?

RA: Plenty.

MD: Which were the most married?

RA: Visayans.

MD: How much were you paid?

RA: One dollar ten cents [\$1.10] a day. My work in the plantation was better compared to the Philippines because here I can earn \$1.10.

MD: How about the time you picked coffee in Keopu?

RA: That was better than Kohala because if I picked one bag I was paid \$1.25. Sometimes I picked three bags.

MD: What was the easiest and hardest work?

RA: Coffee work was easier. Sugar plantation work was harder.

MK: In Kohala, there was supervisor but in coffee there was none, how did you feel about it?

RA: It was better in coffee where there was no supervisor because you can do what you like.

MD: What was your relationship with the other workers?

RA: We had good relationships. When we planned to do something there was cooperation among us. Because pay was cheap, we thought of getting together. We appointed a leader to talk with the plantation boss about raising our very cheap pay.

MD: When the leader talked with the boss, what happened?

RA: The boss said that if sugar prices go higher, they will pay us more. So far we did not have any raise, just the \$1.10.

MD: What were your recreations?

RA: During holidays, Christmas or New Year's, we bought together food for feast.

MD: What food did you buy?

RA: We bought a cow, slaughtered and cooked it for a feast and had fun.

MD: Did you have merrymaking activities?

RA: We had games.

MD: What kinds of games?

RA: Volleyball.

MD: Any other?

RA: No more because at that time there were no other games played in the plantation.

MD: Where did you play volleyball?

RA: We played in Kapaau.

MD: Why did you leave Kohala Mill?

RA: I could not endure the low pay in the plantation so I came back to Kona to look for a job.

MD: How long were you in Kohala mill?

RA: Two years.

MD: What do you think about your life in Kohala?

RA: My life was hard. Pay was so cheap, that's why I thought of looking for a better place to earn money.

MD: When you left Kohala Mill, you went to Waimea in 1934.

RA: Yes.

MD: Why did you go to Waimea and not other places?

RA: Work in Waimea was better. They were paying \$1.75 a day. I went with a town mate who was working on the ranch.

MD: How did you know about Waimea and what you could get there?

RA: Someone was working in Waimea, a cowboy his name Simeon. I met him and he told me it was nice in Waimea. I thought of going with him to Waimea from Kohala.

MK: So that's why he went to Parker Ranch?

MD: Yes.

Describe the place.

RA: In Waimea, there were plenty places to work if you can work. There were those who worked at the pasture. There were also cowboys. I think the work was better than the plantation. I worked as a cowboy. It was good life because it was easier to earn money.

MD: How many worked in the ranch?

RA: We were plenty.

MD: How many?

RA: In the upper part, there were more than 40. Lower part there were more than 60. More than 100 in our section. In Parker Ranch, workers worked in sections. It was a big ranch. One of the biggest ranch in the world.

MD: In your section alone, there were 100?

RA: There were 120.

MD: How about the other sections?

RA: Other sections, there were 30, 10 the smaller sections.

MD: What do you mean by section?

RA: One section means one group. The center of Waimea has the most. The outer areas have less sections. Each section has its camp because Waimea is a huge place.

MD: What kinds of people were in your section?

RA: There were a few Filipinos and more Hawaiians.

MD: How many Filipinos?

RA: There were seven of us.

MD: How was your working relationship with the Hawaiians?

RA: My relationship with the Hawaiians was good.

MD: Why did you say that you had good relationship with the Hawaiians?

RA: The Hawaiians came ahead of me. If I made a mistake, I apologized. They do the same thing if they made a mistake. We were good to each other because we never asked for trouble. There was no competition in work. Even if we were of different nationalities we worked harmoniously.

MD: Describe your work as a cowboy.

RA: It is like if you drive you drive. There were women who helped when we shipped cows. There were plenty who helped when we drove the cows. They helped. They [women] not cowboys, they helped in the drive because cows go astray during the drive.

MD: Is that the only work of a cowboy? Were you not taking care of the cows?

RA: We watched the cows. We watched them in our section. We do weeding and checked broken fences and posts.

MD: You were not a cowboy before, how did you learn to be a cowboy?

RA: When I went with Simeon, he asked the foreman that I work as a cowboy. They hired me as a cowboy.

MD: How did you learn?

RA: You ride the horse. Take your lasso. Lasso the cow if he runs away.

MD: Did they teach you?

RA: No. I watched how they did it. I followed what they did.

MD: How did you feel about getting involved in a job you had never done before?

RA: I never worked that kind of work before but as I can see how the others do it, I can follow how they did it.

MD: Didn't you feel uneasy?

RA: No, because I can follow what the others were doing.

MD: What time do you start and finish work?

RA: We started at 6:00 a.m. and finished at 3:30 p.m.

MD: What days do you work?

RA: We worked until Saturday. From Monday to Saturday.

MK: Ask him, in 1934 he started with \$1.75, when he quit in 1944, how much was his pay?

MD: When you started work in 1934, you were earning \$1.75, what was your pay in 1944?

RA: In 1944 I was getting paid more than five dollars.

MD: Was that one day?

RA: Yes, one day. That was the pay. They pay went higher after the war [World War II].

MD: From 1934 to 1944 how did your pay jump?

RA: We had a yearly raise.

MD: Were you promoted or a natural raise in pay?

RA: My performance was good. I did not drink much like the Hawaiians. I was prompt in reporting to the job plus I was healthy at that time. The Hawaiians did not work good. Sometimes they missed work because they were drunk. Sometimes the Hawaiians worked only five days a week. They were not like me who worked until Saturday.

MK: If the Hawaiians drink, where did they drink?

MD: Where did the Hawaiians drink?

RA: In the store, they bought 'ōkolehao.

MD: Where did they buy it?

RA: A Chinese from Niulii sold in Kohala and Waimea.

MD: The Hawaiians drink for recreation. What did you do for recreation?

RA: I drank soda water.

MD: How do you compare your work in Waimea to the other work you have done. Which one is easier or harder?

RA: My work in Waimea was better

MD: Why?

RA: Pay was better in Waimea.

MD: Was work easier or harder?

RA: Work in Waimea was easier.

MD: If you were not working on Sunday what were you doing?

RA: When there was no work, I visited my friends. I talked with them.

MD: Where were your friends living?

RA: They were living in Kohala. I had a joyful gathering with them.

MD: From Waimea you go to Kohala?

RA: Yes.

MD: How do you go to Kohala?

RA: We rode in an old car, a Model-T.

MD: Who owns the car?

RA: Our car from Waimea.

MD: Does your boss loan you?

RA: Yes.

MD: Who would go with you to Kohala?

RA: The other workers in Waimea.

MD: What did you do during pau hana time?

RA: I worked in my garden where I planted vegetables.

MK: He worked in Waimea for ten years and a part of the time was war years, World War II, what sort of things changed during World War II?

MD: You worked in Waimea for ten years, part of the time was World War II. What sort of things changed during World War II?

RA: There were many changes.

MD: What changes?

RA: Before the war, Waimea was not yet improved.

MD: What do you mean it was not yet improved?

RA: The houses and other buildings were not yet built. During the war, the buildings were slowly put up.

MD: How was your work during the war?

RA: During the war, the work was the same on the ranch.

MD: The pay?

RA: During the war, pay did not go up. It was after the war when pay went up.

MK: Since it was wartime were there changes in the people of Waimea. Were there soldiers?

MD: During the war were there other people moving to Waimea. Were there soldiers?

RA: There were soldiers. They camped in Waimea.

MD: Where in Waimea?

RA: In Kamuela area.

MD: Did you have any relationships with the soldiers?

RA: No I did not have.

MD: Why?

RA: The soldiers were in a different area from us workers. We never mixed with them.

MD: You did not mix with the soldiers?

RA: On Sundays when we did not work, sometimes we mixed with them in stores, restaurants. That was the only contact we had with them.

MD: What did you think about the soldiers being in Waimea?

RA: It was nice.

MD: Why?

RA: Because they can help us during the war. If not for the soldiers, Hawaii would have been in danger. The enemy will be coming here. It was nice the United States sent them here.

MD: What were your feelings towards the Japanese in Waimea?

RA: Our feelings were good. We cannot say they were our enemies because they had no involvement with Japan because they were Hawaii-born and they belonged here. They will fight for the country of their birth. They were not our enemies because they were born here like the others.

MK: And during the war, there were many restrictions like blackouts, and they could not go out at night sometimes, how did the restrictions affect his life in Waimea?

MD: During the war there were restrictions like blackout and sometimes you cannot go out at night, how did these restrictions affect your life in Waimea?

RA: It was a military government regulation, we should not go against it. If you go against it, they will kill you.

MD: Were you against it?

RA: No, I was not against it because we have to follow the law.

MK: He left Waimea in 1944, why did he leave Waimea?

MD: In 1944 you left Waimea, why did you leave Waimea?

RA: I planned on having my own business.

MD: Why did you plan to start a business of your own?

RA: I knew that being a cowboy, I can no longer do the job when I grew old. If I have a business of my own I can run the business even if I am old.

MD: What sort of business did you have in mind?

RA: Farmer.

MD: Why did you want to be a farmer and not something else?

RA: That was all I knew because I did not have education. If I had education, I should have thought of a better one.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MD: Why did you come to Kona?

RA: I knew that this place is good. The climate is good and not windy like the other places. When I saw the place, my feelings was to stay here and make business here.

- MK: In 1926 to 1931, he was in Kona, he knew that coffee prices were sometimes down, sometimes up, why did he still return to Kona for coffee?
- MD: In 1926 to 1931, you were in Kona, you knew that coffee prices were sometimes down, sometimes up, why did you still return to Kona for coffee?
- RA: The climate was agreeable to me so I thought of trying my luck in business. Besides, the soil was good especially for coffee. The Japanese farmers were living good despite low prices of coffee, why not.
- MD: What part of Kona did you move in?
- RA: The place is Kainaliu.
- MD: Before you got into coffee business, what did you know about coffee?
- RA: I got my experience in coffee from the Japanese. If you watch how they do it, you can learn from them.
- MD: How did you finance the coffee farm?
- RA: I had savings from my previous jobs to finance the farm.
- MD: How much money did you use in financing the farm?
- RA: I did not spend much money. I took over a Japanese [farm].
- MD: What's his name?
- RA: M. Ito [?], he was a Konawaena schoolteacher. He told me nobody can take care of their coffee because his brother went to the service and his father died. He asked me to continue the lease. He has a sister who owns a restaurant in Kainaliu. Her name is Sandy.
- MD: How much did you spend?
- RA: I paid him \$250 to continue the lease.
- MD: Was the \$250 used just for the lease of the land or for equipment too or what was the \$250 for?
- RA: With the \$250 I bought fertilizers and poisons.
- MK: How much did he pay to lease the land?
- MD: How much did you pay to lease the land?
- RA: I paid \$20 per acre.

MD: How many acres was the farm?

RA: Six acres.

MD: How long was the lease?

RA: Two years lease.

MD: What was the \$20 for? For one year or for two years?

RA: That was for one year.

MK: Who was the owner of the land?

MD: Who was the owner of the land?

RA: Owned by Aaron Trust.

MD: Were you leasing the land directly from M. Ito?

RA: The lease was transferred to me. It was no longer M. Ito's.

MD: When you took over the lease, were there already coffee?

RA: There were already coffee [trees].

MD: Were you already picking coffee?

RA: Yes. I was picking coffee.

MD: Did you hire workers?

RA: Yes, I hired five workers that time.

MD: How did you find these workers?

RA: They were acquaintances of mine who lived here.

MD: Did they live with you?

RA: Yes, they lived with me.

MD: Of what ethnicity were they?

RA: They were Filipinos -- Visayans and Ilocanos.

MD: No others?

RA: None.

MD: Did they live with you or you provided them a separate house?

RA: They had a separate house.

MD: Besides housing, what else did you provide for them?

RA: I gave them ride to work.

MD: Why a ride?

RA: They needed ride to my other farms because I had farms in Konawaena and Napoopoo and Kainaliu. We don't go together to work. We were divided.

MK: Where were your other farms?

RA: In Kingsley above Konawaena School and in Napoopoo by the flower farm in Ke'ei.

MD: How many acres in all was your coffee farm?

RA: At that time I had 20 acres at Kingsley, 13 at Napoopoo. But those farms were not properly cared for because when coffee prices went down I just left them. Those farms were left because coffee prices went down while expenses were high. Plenty farmers went broke. Only the [macadamia] nut [prices] were good.

MD: When the pickers picked the abandoned coffee did the pickers get all the profits or you shared with them?

RA: When I gave up the other farms, we did not pick the coffee [cherry coffee]. If you hire pickers you lose because coffee prices were too low. Pickers want to be paid four dollars a bag while you sell a bag of cherry three dollars a bag. We just abandoned the other farms and worked only on this farm.

MD: How much were you paying your pickers on your own farm?

RA: Picking coffee was contract. I paid \$1.25, \$1.50 a bag. In 1950 I made some money because the price of coffee was high while I was paying pickers cheap.

MD: Did they do other jobs aside from picking?

RA: No.

MD: How about hō hana?

RA: After picking coffee, I poisoned the grass.

MD: Did they do pruning for you?

RA: No, I did the pruning myself because I wanted to cut on the expenses, besides I was able to do it myself. The area was small.

MD: How many months of the year did the workers pick for you?

RA: Sometimes we start in September, October, November, December, January, until February.

MD: Six months.

Did you keep all the pickers from September to January?

RA: Only two stayed because I did not have enough money to pay them.

MD: When did the others leave?

RA: I can't remember when the others left.

MD: Why not enough work?

RA: The coffee prices were too low.

MD: Did you lay them off?

RA: No, they went on their own to find job. Besides, when the leases expired, we had to go separate ways.

MD: How did you supervise them when they were picking coffee?

RA: I don't supervise them. In the afternoon, I sewed the coffee bags.

MD: I asked him what happens if the bags were not properly filled. He said everybody knows how to fill up a bag.

Did you check the bag to see what kind of coffee they were picking?

RA: I don't need to because they were experienced pickers.

MD: Did the same pickers come back during the years you had the coffee lands?

RA: Yes, they were the same pickers.

MD: Did you ask them to come back?

RA: Because we were good friends they come back during the picking season.

MD: They come voluntarily?

RA: Yes.

MD: What were they doing the other months they were not picking coffee for you?

RA: Probably they looked for other jobs. They go back to their own homes and I don't know what they do.

MD: Where were they from?

RA: They lived in Kona.

MD: If they had other homes, why don't they stay in their homes and come to your place to work only?

RA: If they come to pick, they stay so they can start working early in the morning. They don't have to spend too much for gasoline and tire.

MD: From what time to what time were your workers working?

RA: Since it was contract, there was no set time for them to start. They go early and quit 4 [o'clock] or 5 [o'clock] in the afternoon.

MD: Contract by bag or . . .

RA: By the bag. A bag picked was paid \$1.50

MD: At that time did you have a pulper and drying platform?

RA: I had both.

MD: After the coffee is picked how do you make it into parchment? Explain.

RA: Coffee is picked. The next step is to grind it at the pulper. Soak the ground coffee in the box. Wash the coffee in the morning. Coffee will be brought by the shaker to the platform. At the platform it is raked every hour.

MD: How many days is the coffee dried?

RA: If it is a good sunny day, 2-1/2 or 2-3/4 days, it will be dry.

MD: Who did the work?

RA: I did the work myself. I can grind 30 to 45 bags, myself.

MD: For how many hours?

RA: Two hours. After grinding the coffee, I can soak the coffee in a box and have the shaker bring the coffee to the platform. As soon as the coffee is on the platform, I can spread it 1-1/2 inches thick and can be dried 2-1/2 days on a good sunny day. If it is not sunny it takes three days to become parchment.

MD: Did the drying platform and pulper come with the lease or were these already with the land?

RA: I built the pulper and the platform. I built the platform. The pulper was made by Ashihara.

MD: How did you know how to build a platform?

RA: It was easy. See how the house looks like. Put a railing on which the roof moves so you can move it back and forth.

MD: How much did the drying platform cost you to make?

RA: It cost me more than \$1,300.

MD: How did you have the money?

RA: When I started the coffee there was no platform. After the first year, I made money.

MD: How much?

RA: More than \$5,000 in one season in 1945.

MK: He made a profit of more than \$5,000. How did he process the coffee? He had to have the platform first to get the coffee processed. How did he do that? Was he selling the cherry first?

MD: You made a profit of more than \$5,000. How did you process the coffee the first year when you don't have platform. Did you sell the cherry?

RA: During the first year I rented Yamagata's pulper and drying platform. Yamagata was interned in the Mainland during the war [World War II] so I rented their extra platform.

MD: Do you remember how many bags you picked per acre?

RA: I picked 325 bags from six acres.

MD: How was the quality of your coffee in those two years you took care coffee?

RA: It was good coffee. It has big berries. It was California coffee. It was fruitful considering 325 bags on six acres.

MK: That year he processed his own coffee, others sell cherry. What are the advantages or disadvantages of having selling dry [parchment] coffee or cherry coffee?

MD: What are the advantages or disadvantages of selling dry or cherry coffee?

RA: It is better if you processed than sell cherry. In cherry they just gave you the price they like. If you processed your coffee you can avoid other expenses in the coffee mill. Life the coffee mill in Napoopoo, they picked up your coffee bags. They processed it. They took out all their expenses.

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE ONE; TAPE NO. 9-31-2-80 TR

MD: Continuation to second session with Raymundo Agustin on December 19, 1980 at his home in Kainaliu ma uka, Kona, Hawaii. Back when you were processing your own coffee, could you hold on to the coffee until prices were a little bit better?

RA: That can be. When higher prices come, I can sell my coffee.

MD: Did you do that for two years?

RA: Yes I did. If good prices come from the Mainland, the buyers competed for coffee because there were plenty millers. I can sell my coffee to the buyers who offered higher prices because I processed my own coffee.

MD: The buyers came from the Mainland?

RA: No, they were local buyers, the millers, but orders come from the Mainland.

MD: Who did you sell your coffee to?

RA: I sold most of my coffee to Kudo.

MD: Did you sell to the others?

RA: To Matsuoka.

MK: How did he make his decision who to sell to?

MD: How did you make your decision who to sell to?

RA: I sold my coffee to who offered the highest price.

MK: And how was the sale arranged?

MD: And how was the sale arranged?

RA: The buyer came to pick up my coffee so I don't have to pay transportation to the mill. Money was paid to me at my house.

MD: How does the buyer know when to come?

RA: Buyer came first to talk to me. I bagged the coffee and the buyer weighs them at my place or I followed the bags to the mill where they were weighed.

MD: How did the miller know when you had coffee ready to sell?

RA: The miller comes around to check if there were dried coffee ready to sell.

- MD: When you were farming where did you buy the things and equipment for yourself and for your farm?
- RA: I bought my needs from the coffee mills.
- MD: What coffee mills?
- RA: The coffee mills I sold my coffee to. Sometimes I paid cash so I don't have to charge.
- MD: Do you charge at the coffee mills?
- RA: If I don't have cash, I charged the fertilizers and poisons and my food.
- MD: When you get your food and equipment from the miller, do you pay them with coffee or with cash?
- RA: If I charged from the miller my food and equipment, I paid them in coffee.
- MD: Was there a limit as to how much you can charge?
- RA: For food there was no limit. For the equipment the miller knew how much was needed on the farm so I cannot charge as much as I wish for the year.
- MK: Those years he made good, he made profit, what if he did not make profit, would the miller put a limit on his credit if he did not do good?
- MD: Those years you made profit, if you did not, did the miller put a limit on your credit?
- RA: They put a limit. They knew how much I can eat. They knew the expenses in the farm so they will not give you extra.
- MK: I heard that other farmers planted other crops besides coffee, did he plant anything other than coffee, vegetable or macadamia nut or anything else during that time?
- RA: I only planted vegetables but not macadamia nuts.
- MD: Did you sell the vegetables?
- RA: No, I used them for food. I gave them to neighbors if there were extras.
- MK: The county extension agent, the experiment station people, how did they help him?
- MD: The county extension agents, the experiment station people, did they help you?

RA: The experiment station helped me.

MD: How did they help you?

RA: In 1966 there were schools to teach farmers. I attended classes for almost a year.

MK: In 1966?

MD: In 1966.

MK: How about in 1945 to 1947, did he do anything with the experiment station or with the county agents people?

MD: In 1945 to 1947 did you do anything with the experiment station or with the county agents people?

RA: No contact.

MK: He told us he learned from the Japanese. Did the Japanese farmers help you in any other way or did other farmers help you?

MD: You told us you learned from the Japanese farmers, did the Japanese farmers help you in any other way or did other farmers help you?

RA: No, I learned from what they have been doing.

MD: Were you a member of a kumi or any group of farmers in 1945 to 1947?

RA: No.

MK: Those years 1945 to 1947 when he was not working, what did he do with his time?

RA: In 1945 to 1947 when I was not working I went fishing with my workers. We also had a garden.

MK: Where did he go fishing?

RA: In Napoopoo by Captain Cook Monument at Kaawaloa.

MD: What kind of fishing did you do? Did you use boat or something?

RA: We used hook, spear and diving.

MD: How many Filipinos lived in the area of your farm?

RA: No Filipinos. There were only Japanese.

MD: During the time, were there Filipino celebrations or get-togethers in the Kona area?

RA: Rizal Day, New Year's, Christmas, and Fourth of July were celebrated.

MK: How did they celebrate?

RA: We got together as a group. We ate together, some were dancing.

MD: How was it organized?

RA: The president of the Filipino Community organization asked contributions from the people. They used the money for the occasion.

MD: Who was the president back then?

RA: Severo Dinson.

MD: How was he elected?

RA: He was voted in.

MD: Do you have meetings?

RA: Yes, we had meetings.

MD: How do you hold meetings?

RA: We got together.

MD: How often do you hold meetings?

RA: Two times a year.

MD: How many members were there?

RA: There were more than 80 members.

MK: Mostly men or women? Who were in it?

RA: There were more women.

MD: At that time, if there were women, were there families then?

RA: There were families.

MD: What did the Filipino families do back then?

RA: I don't know what they were doing, because I did not go to their homes but I assume they were working for a living.

MD: Men and women?

RA: Yes.

MD: What were the women doing?

RA: Picked nut or coffee.

MK: He mentioned about Severo Dinson [a Visayan] as leader, I am curious about Ilocano-Visayan relationships in Kona that time.

MD: Severo Dinson was the leader, how was the relationship between Ilocanos and Visayans at that time?

RA: There were more Visayans than Ilocanos at that time. When we got together we communicated in pidgin Tagalog. Those that spoke English, communicated in English.

MD: No trouble?

RA: No problem.

MK: Did they separate or mix?

RA: We were mixed as a group.

MD: How did the Filipino community mix with the other ethnic groups?

RA: What I knew about our dealings with the Japanese, Portuguese and Hawaiians, was, we understood each other through pidgin English. We also understood some Japanese words like "sayonara."

MD: Were there problems?

RA: No, we do not argue with them.

MD: How much contact did you have with the other ethnic groups?

RA: Contact was often, especially at work we were together, Japanese or Filipinos. If we have one boss, I saw them every day.

MD: How about in the store?

RA: In the store, if I met the Japanese, Hawaiians, they were nice.

MK: Tell him that I heard many of the Filipinos in Kona were Catholic, were the Filipinos in Kona active in the Catholic church?

MD: She heard that many Filipinos in Kona are Catholic. Were the Filipinos in Kona active in the Catholic church?

RA: Those Filipino Catholics that I knew few of them go to church.

MD: Why did you leave the Kainaliu coffee farm in 1947?

RA: The lease expired so I was forced to leave.

MD: Why did you not renew the lease?

RA: I cannot because the farm was sold to an individual farmer.

MD: Why did you not try to buy?

RA: I had no family to inherit the property if I die, besides I had other open farms I had been working on.

MD: What did you mean by you had open farms that you had been working on?

RA: In 1945 I opened farms. These farms were beside the coffee farm I took over from M. Ito.

MK: When he said he opened some farms, did he clear new coffee land?

MD: Do you mean you cleared new coffee land?

RA: Yes, I cleared the lantana. It was a wild land.

MD: Were you leasing the land from somebody?

RA: I was leasing from Bishop Estate and from the Leslie family.

MD: Were you leasing from the Leslies and Bishop Estate or you were leasing the Bishop Estate land through the Leslies?

RA: Those were two separate lands.

MD: How much were you paying for the lease?

RA: To the Bishop land I paid lease on the third year. To the Leslies I paid lease after one year.

MK: That was after he cleared the land. He was leasing land many places, he has good profit those years. He was leasing land from Leslies, Bishop Estate and Aaron Trust and was making good profit, how did he compare with other farmers those years?

MD: You leased from Aaron Trust, Leslies and Bishop Estate, you made good profit, how did you compare with other farmers those years?

RA: The Japanese had more money because they had families to help in the farm. I paid my workers so the familied farmers made more profit because they did not pay pickers.

MD: You worked plantation, ranch and coffee land. What are your feelings about the three different jobs?

RA: Regarding the three different jobs, I feel that running my own business [coffee farming] was the best. I can do what I liked to do. Nobody to supervise me. I rested when I wanted to because there was no boss. If I worked for somebody, I'll be obligated to

the boss. It is always better to have your own business than working for somebody.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-51-3-81 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Raymundo Agustin (AG)

January 23, 1981

Kainaliu Mauka, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Modesto Daranciang (MD) and Michiko Kodama (MK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Ilocano. Translation done by Modesto Daranciang.]

MD: Interview with Raymundo Agustin at his home in Kainaliu ma uka, Kona, Hawaii on January 23, 1981. When your lease on the Kainaliu coffee farm expired, where did you go?

RA: When my Kainaliu coffee farm lease expired, I moved ma uka of Mauricio Cacal coffee land above Yamagata, you know the place.

MD: Why did you move there?

RA: I moved there because I have to watch my ranch of 11-plus acres.

MK: So in 1947 he did not move to this present place, he moved to the place above Yamagata?

MD: In 1947 you did not move yet to this place, you moved above Yamagata?

RA: It was five years later [1952], I moved to this place. But I had a three-acre coffee farm lease with the Weeks around their house.

MK: It [the three-acre lease] is not this land though?

MD: It is not this land.

RA: No, not yet. This is a different farm. This was Mrs. Weeks' property but this is owned now by Johnny Weeks, because she divided the property among her children.

MK: Why don't we ask about the coffee land he was farming in 1947, that will be two places, one near the ranch and the three-acre parcel from Mrs. Weeks. Ask him about the land above Yamagata's pool hall; who owns the land?

MD: Who owns the land above Yamagata's pool hall near Mauricio?

RA: It was owned by Walter Ackerman who was a brother of Mrs. Weeks.

MD: Did he lease the land from Walter Ackerman?

RA: Yes.

MD: For how many years?

RA: Eight years.

MD: How much was the lease?

RA: At that time, it was cheap. I paid \$35 an acre for one year.

MD: How many acres did you lease from Mr. Ackerman?

RA: More than 12 acres.

MK: More than twelve acres and at the same time he was leasing three acres from Mrs. Weeks?

MD: When you were leasing from Mr. Ackerman, were you also leasing the three acres from Mrs. Weeks?

RA: Yes, three acres below and twelve acres above the same time and the same years.

MD: How long was your lease and how much were you paying Mrs. Weeks?

RA: In 1950 I was paying Mrs. Weeks \$40 an acre and I still have the lease on the land with this present farm. In the beginning I leased from Mrs. Weeks the three acres. Mrs. Weeks gave me the sixteen acres, [present farm] when the Japanese farmers who were leasing from her moved out.

MD: When you were leasing the three acres and the sixteen acres did you still keep the ranch?

RA: I gave up the ranch when I had the sixteen acres. I moved down the cows.

MD: You had leased a whole lot of land, how did you manage to lease such land?

RA: I was leasing the three acres for \$40 an acre for a year. Five years later I took this sixteen acres. For the whole farm of nineteen acres, I was leasing it for more than \$600.

MD: How did you manage to get that much money to pay the lease?

RA: The produce from this farm is sufficient to pay the lease.

MD: Do you remember the coffee prices at that time?

RA: Coffee prices were cheap. In 1950, the price of parchment was 50 cents a pound.

MD: How about a bag of cherry?

RA: I don't know because I was making parchment.

MD: Did you consider that a good price at that time?

RA: In 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1953, the price was good. In 1954, 1955 the prices went down for eight or ten years.

MD: Who were you selling your coffee to during that time?

RA: I was selling to Matsuoka and Kudo.

MD: Just the two of them?

RA: Sometimes I sold to Captain Cook Mill and also American Factors. The one that offered the highest price was where I sold my coffee.

MD: By the late 1950's there was a co-op[coffee farmers' cooperative]; did you ever sell your coffee to the co-op?

RA: Yes, I sold some of my coffee to the co-op but as I said, whoever offered the highest price, that's where I sold my coffee. Even if I was a member of a co-op, I can sell my coffee to anybody who offered the highest price. The coffee mills competed in buying coffee.

MD: To get higher prices, did you go to negotiate and compare for prices?

RA: The different coffee mills came to me and offered their prices. I played wise until the miller with the highest price came.

MK: For him to do that, he had to have parchment coffee, he cannot keep coffee long time, he had a large acreage, he had it processed to parchment stage, how did he have the labor to do all this?

MD: For you to do that, you have a large acreage, you cannot keep coffee long time, you process your coffee to parchment stage, how did you have the labor to do all these?

RA: At that time, I found three or four people to work for me so I hired them. Sometimes I pulped 50 bags a day. Three or four people helped me because I cannot do it myself. The drying I did it myself. The three or four people I hired brought the bags of cherry [coffee] to the pulper so I can pulp plenty.

- MD: How much of your time was involved in this work per day?
- RA: It took me fifteen hours. I had little [time] for sleep, that is during the pulping time. After the pulping, it took me ten hours to do the drying.
- MD: Who does the picking?
- RA: The people who did not have work, picked for me.
- MD: How many picked for you?
- RA: I hired ten, fifteen, twenty people. The schoolchildren came to pick coffee on Saturdays and Sundays.
- MD: During vacation on special coffee schedule, did you use the schoolchildren on weekdays?
- RA: They came to pick coffee during the picking season. [But] part of their vacation did not fall during the coffee picking season.
- MD: What type of people were the adult workers?
- RA: They were Filipinos, Japanese and Hawaiians. The people who belong to clubs came also to pick coffee. They used it as a fund raising activity.
- MD: What kind of clubs?
- RA: Women's Club. Sometimes there were 20, 25 or 30.
- MD: Those who were not children or members of the club, how did you find them?
- RA: I went to the employment office. I told them how many pickers I needed and that was what they gave me.
- MK: In those days in the 1950s did he have difficulty in finding pickers to work for him?
- MD: In those days in the 1950s did you have difficulty in finding pickers to work for you?
- RA: It was not hard to find pickers during those years because not many people worked outside of coffee. Nobody worked in the hotels. Plenty people wanted to pick coffee. Even plantation workers came to pick coffee. Women from the plantations came to look for jobs especially before Christmas. There were plenty people to hire but now they work in hotels and construction jobs.
- MD: From about when did people start work in hotels and construction?
- RA: Four or five years after the war [World War II] people started working in construction, eventually hotel jobs came out.

MD: In 1950 or 1960 how much were you paying your pickers?

RA: In 1960 I was paying \$5 a bag.

MD: How about in 1950?

RA: In 1950 I paid \$2.25 a bag picked. In 1960 or 1965 I paid \$5. The pay is coming up until now. Now is \$10 or \$15.

MK: Did he provide anything other than money to compensate the pickers?

MD: Did you provide anything other than money to compensate the pickers?

RA: Yes, there were [other compensation]. For them to work harder, I gave them bonus.

MD: How much bonus?

RA: I gave them ten cents bonus for every dollar earned.

MK: So he no longer provided housing to the pickers?

MD: So you did not provide housing to the pickers?

RA: The pickers had their own homes. I provided sleeping facilities for pickers that came from the plantations. Sometimes I rented a house below the road.

MK: During those times, did he plant other crops besides coffee?

MD: During those times, did you plant other crops aside from coffee?

RA: Yes. I planted avocado.

MD: Did you plant taro?

RA: I planted but in small amounts. Only taro and avocado, and beans but only for food.

MD: Did you sell avocado?

RA: No, sometimes I fed it to the pigs.

MK: He has been a coffee farmer for a long time, what were his feelings about being a coffee farmer?

MD: You had been a coffee farmer for a long time, what were your feelings about being a coffee farmer?

RA: All the work I put in was good. I had enough to live on. I was also able to support my family.

- MK: How about the bad times when coffee prices were low, how did he feel as a coffee farmer?
- MD: How about the bad times when coffee prices were low, how did you feel as a coffee farmer?
- RA: When coffee prices went down, I cut down the acreage so that I don't have to work too hard and I don't have to spend too much money. I never felt bad because farming is the only work I know.
- MK: But he cut down his acreage and started to work less, he had even less money coming in, how did he manage?
- MD: But you cut down your acreage and started to work less, you have even less money coming in, how did you manage?
- RA: Although I cut down my acreage, I left enough to support myself and my family.
- MK: He is still a coffee farmer, why did he continue until now?
- MD: You are still a coffee farmer, why did you continue until now?
- RA: That is the only work I know so I did not stop farming. I have also plenty needs so I did not stop farming. I have also a family to support. I worked until I broke my leg.
- MK: What are the major changes he notices in coffee farming within the last ten or fifteen years?
- MD: What are the major changes you noticed in farming within the last ten or fifteen years?
- RA: There are changes.
- MD: What are the changes?
- RA: The changes are that there are less coffee farms now. Construction people came to build homes and office buildings. What used to be coffee land these are now homes.
- MK: Are there changes in techniques in growing coffee, picking coffee or marketing the coffee?
- MD: Are there changes in techniques in growing coffee, picking coffee or marketing the coffee?
- RA: There are no changes in techniques in growing coffee because they have not invented yet plow to cultivate coffee, farmers still use hố hana. In picking, there are no machines yet that pick coffee. Only in marketing there are changes. Coffee are graded for quality. If you have a better cared-for coffee, the prices will be better.

MK: He lived in Kona a long time, he has seen the Filipino population grow. What changes has he seen in the Filipino community?

MD: You have lived in Kona a long time, you have seen the Filipino population grow, what changes have you seen in the Filipino community?

RA: There are organizations among the Filipinos where we can unite. Filipinos made homes of their own. Filipinos became educated.

MD: What kind of organization did you mention?

RA: The older Filipinos organized Filipino fiestas. The younger Filipinos formed clubs to benefit people, clubs to give scholarships.

MD: As you look back, what do you think about your life in Kona?

RA: My life in the past was hard. There was the depression. Now it is different. The prices of things that I sell are high so I feel good because I can buy the things I need.

MK: He has been a plantation worker, he has been a cowboy, he has been a coffee farmer, which was the best and why?

MD: You have been a plantation worker, you have been a cowboy, you have been a coffee farmer, which was the best and why?

RA: Of all the work I have gone through, coffee farming is the best.

MD: Why?

RA: I am on my own on the coffee work. Whatever I earned nobody shares with me. The other work, the boss shares with my earning. In my coffee work, all the income is mine. I have no boss. I only pay tax whereas in my other jobs I only got a certain part of what I worked for, most of the money go to the boss or the employer.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

JUNE 1981